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Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 11062 141457Z

42
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ERDA-05 OMB-01 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 MC-02 /088 W
---------- 059689
R 141309Z OCT 76
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7387
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION NATO
CINCEUCOM

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: MNUC GR
SUBJECT: MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON ACQUISITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

REF: ATHENS 10009 (NOTAL)

1. DURING AN INTERVIEW WITH THE ATHENS DAILY
APOYEVMATINI (PRO-GOVT) OCT 12 ON GREECE'S OVERALL
DEFENSE POSTURE, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF WAS QUERIED
CONCERNING REPORTS THAT THE GOVT WAS CONSIDERING
DEVELOPMENT OF A NUCLEAR (WEAPONS) PLANT.
AVEROFF REPLIED "THE UTILIZATION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR
MILITARY PURPOSES IS VERY COMPLEX AND DANGEROUS. WE ARE NOT
PREPARING TO BUILD SUCH A PLANT. HOWEVER, THIS IS CERTAIN--
IF THE NUCLEAR ARMS RACE DEVELOPS OUTSIDE THE CURRENT SMALL
CIRCLE, WE WILL NOT REMAIN ON THE SIDELINES. WE WILL BE AMONG
THE FIRST TO JOIN IT."

2. ASKED TO COMMENT ON A RECENT STATEMENT BY PASOK
LEADER ANDREASPAPANDREOU ADVOCATING THE ACQUISITION OF
NUCLEAR WEAPONS BY UNORTHODOX MEANS (REFTEL), AVEROFF
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PAGE 02 ATHENS 11062 141457Z

REPLIED "I PREFER TO RESERVE UNORTHODOX MEANS FOR OTHER

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PROBLEMS. IN THIS PROBLEM, UNORTHODOX MEANS MIGHT DESTROY THE MAN WHO WOULD USE THEM, OR UNORTHODOX MEANS MIGHT EXIST ONLY IN THE IMAGINATION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE."

3. APOYEVMATINI SENSATIONALIZED AVEROFF'S COMMENTS. UNDER A BANNER HEADLINE "EVEN ATOMIC WEAPONS, IF NECESSARY" THE ARTICLE PARAPHRASES HIS REMARKS TO THE EFFECT THAT GREECE IS READY, HAS DECIDED AND HAS THE CAPABILITY TO JOIN THE "CLUB" OF NATIONS ARMED WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS IMMEDIATELY AS SOON AS THE DANGER IS APPARENT THAT THEIR CURRENT SMALL AND CONTROLLED NUMBER MAY INCREASE. SUBSEQUENTLY, THE ARTICLE QUOTES AVEROFF DIRECTLY STATING THAT GREECE IS NOT PREPARING TO BUILD A NUCLEAR PLANT.

4. IN THE SAME PRESS INTERVIEW, AVEROFF CONFIRMED THAT THE GOG HAS DECIDED TO ESTABLISH A FACTORY TO MANUFACUTRE TANKS. HE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT IT MAY BE SOME TIME BEFORE THIS CAN BE REALIZED. RESPONDING TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF GREEK AND TURKISH MILITARY FORCES, AVEROFF DECLINED TO COMMENT ON A NUMERICAL COMPARISON OF THE FORCES BUT ADDED "THE LEADERSHIP OF THE (GREEK) ARMED FORCES IS EXCELLENT ON ALL LEVELS...IN ADDITION, THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, WITH THE PERSONAL INTERVENTION OF THE PRIME MINISTER, OFFERS EVERYTHING POSSIBLE. ABOVE ALL IT OFFERS ONE VALUABLE THING: THE GOAL TO HAVE A STRONG INTERNATIONAL POSITION... AND FINALLY TO HAVE INCREASED POSSIBILITIES FOR THE PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF OUR DIFFERENCES WITH NEIGHBORS."

5. COMMENT: ACCORDING TO DAO, THE GOG ESTABLISHED A TANK REBUILD FACILITY NEAR VOLOS OVER TWO YEARS AGO WHICH IS NOW CAPABLE OF TOTALLY REBUILDING M-47 AND M-48 TANKS AT THE RATE OF ABOUT 300 A YEAR. ALTHOUGH IT IS A LONG WAY FROM REBUILD TO MANUFACTURE, IT DOES SHOW GREEK INTENT FOR SOME FORM OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN TANKS. THE REBUILD PLAND IS MODERN AND EFFICIENT. IT EMPLOYS OVER 1200 TECHNICIANS WHO MIGHT EASILY BE RETRAINED FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF TANKS IF ALL THE OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR SUCH AN ENDEAVOR ARE MET.
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NNN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, NUCLEAR ENERGY, SALES, PRESS CONFERENCES, ARMS PRODUCTION, NUCLEAR WEAPONS, NUCLEAR SAFETY
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: BoyleJA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ATHENS11062
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760386-0705
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761055/aaaabvar.tel
Line Count: 108
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ATHENS 10009
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: BoyleJA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 NOV 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 NOV 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <05 AUG 2004 by BoyleJA>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MINISTER OF DEFENSE ON ACQUISITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
TAGS: MNUC, GR, (AVEROFF, EVANGELOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006